Remembering USS UTAH...

2nd Quarter 2009

"Rest well, yet sleep lightly and hear the call, if again sounded, to provide firepower for freedom…"

THE JERSEYMAN 7 Years - Nr. 62

USS UTAH (BB-31/AG-16)
Ship's bell on display at the University of Utah, in Salt Lake City
Keel laid down March 1909 at New York Shipbuilding, Camden, N.J.
Sunk during Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor - Dec 7, 1941
Photo courtesy of RMCM William Hughes, USN/Retired
Grand Prairie, Texas
(Radioman 3/c crewman aboard USS UTAH - December 7, 1941)

THE MUSIC OF WORLD WAR II…

For those of us that remember the big bands of the 1940's, and stirring World War II songs with lyrics we could actually understand, you may want to check out this website:

http://www.6thcorpsmusic.us/

Vera Lynn - *"Land Of Hope and Glory",* Jimmy Durante - *"I'll Be Seeing You", "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition", "Bluebirds Over the White Cliffs of Dover", "Joltin' Joe Dimaggio",* and *"Bless 'em all"* by Bing Crosby... they're all here.

To hear what the German side was listening to during the war, you can find a powerful *"Panzerlied",* and *"Lili Marlene".* More than 200 songs, and all are downloadable at no cost.

Marion Chard, who's father served in the European Theater of Operations (ETO), put together these musical memories in honor of her father and his World War II service with the VI Corps - 540th Combat Engineers.

We ask readers to please let Marion know if you enjoyed these songs.
Her contact information is found at the VI Corps website.
We also thank Marion for linking her WWII website to the Battleship New Jersey!

Marion J. Chard
"Proud Daughter of Walter (Monday) Poniedzialek"
540th Combat Engineer - WWII
Alger, Michigan

Editor's Notes:

During the past few months, we got lucky and made contact with survivors of battleship USS *Utah* - sunk at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.

Bill Hughes, retired Master Chief Radioman of Grand Prairie, Texas, and Warren "Red" Upton of San Jose, California, have provided their eyewitness accounts aboard *Utah* during the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. At the time, both were Radiomen 3/class, and their recollections are described below. - TH

Eyewitness Report...
William (Bill) Hughes, Rm3/c USN
USS UTAH, December 7, 1941

I had been aboard USS *Utah* for more than a year. I had learned my way around that huge ship during the first few months aboard as a radio messenger.

It is true that I was *lost* a great deal of the time. Prior to December 7th I had been promoted from sleeping on a hammock with one of the Deck Divisions to the more luxurious "radio operator" bunk room adjacent to Main Radio where we slept on cots. We were located two decks below the main deck, and one deck above the engine room.

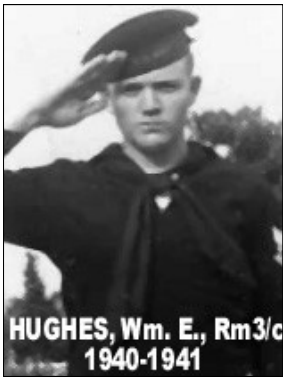
Life aboard the Utah had been great. I had made the transition from farm boy to the rating of Radioman, third class, and had come to enjoy the cohesiveness of my fellow radio operators. The operations of the Utah as a bombing target, an AA machine gun school, a submarine target and radio controlled ship was carried out in a disciplined manner; however, our lifestyle was comparatively relaxed. The "chow" was excellent and there was more liberty than we "grunts" could afford.

But at 07:55 AM, Sunday Morning, December 7th 1941, our lives would be changed forever. We had not been trained to anticipate a major, all out *sneak attack* by a large force of foreign military aircraft from a country with whom we were not at war.

On that lazy Sunday morning, most off-duty radiomen were asleep on our dry, comfortable cots in the bunk room. The tumultuous explosion that rocked the ship almost threw us out of our bunks. We must have been looking at each other in sheer amazement. One man, Radioman 3/c Warren Upton was dressed and "spiffed up" for a day ashore. He was bending over someone's cot attempting to obtain an object from his locker. Another said we had been rammed [by another ship].

Within 20 or so seconds, a second jarring explosion again rocked the ship, also from the port side, and within minutes USS *Utah* was taking on a pronounced list to port. It was obvious to all of us that we needed to reach top side immediately. As I recall, our departure from the sleeping quarters was orderly but swift. Up two ladders and we found ourselves huddling under a protected part of the superstructure called the starboard air castle.

By this time, Jap aircraft were making strafing runs on the hapless sailors who were exposed to their fire. Since all our guns had been covered for bombing practice the week before, we could not fire back, and the giant ship was listing rapidly to port. Personnel who came up from below and entered the deck on the port side were in immediate danger of being crushed from falling timbers, and many were. These timbers protected our deck and provided a viable target for practice bomb hits to be marked when we were participating in bombing exercises.



It has been stated that an order to "Abandon Ship" was given. I failed to hear the command above the noise and bedlam. It became a matter of every man for himself. Personally, I felt an urgent need to distance myself from the ship, and a leap over the starboard side fairly early in the game found me swimming to the mooring quay where I was able to hide behind the pilings during the continuing strafing runs.

A great danger faced by all of us was jumping on someone or debris in the water, or being jumped on by someone else. Fortunately I was spared from this hazard.

At the first lull in activity, I swam for shore, and the only scratch I received during World War 2 occurred when wading up the beech onto Ford Island. I cut my bare foot on a piece of coral. It was minor; it did not delay me from seeking refuge in the pipe line ditch where most of the crew ended up until the planes of our "newly acquired enemy" finally returned to their carriers. There, I "hunkered down" dripping wet in my "skivvy" shirt, shorts and a pair of white knee high tropical trousers. All my personal belongings, including a prized photo of movie actress Rita Hayworth, remained aboard ship in my locker.

While hunkered down in the ditch, watching terror reign from the skies, these thoughts: (1) Where in the h-- are all these planes coming from and how long will they keep coming, and (2) I asked my nearby shipmates "what do you think "Washington" is going to say about this?" The latter expression stemmed from the fact that I was being trained to copy wireless press news for the ship. For weeks there had been numerous and lengthy press releases datelined "WASHINGTON" with announcements and comments on the world situation.

We observed some fine moments.. First and foremost was the heroic action of Warrant Officer Stanley Symanski and the men from USS Raleigh and Utah, who volunteered to go back aboard the big broad bottom of the now capsized Utah in the face of enemy fire, and cut our Shipmate Jack Vaessen out of the double bottoms. It is gratifying to know that some 61 years later Jack is alive and living in California. So is Warrant Officer Symanski, who retired from the Navy as a Commander.

Other personnel exemplified unusual valor in disregarding their safety and operating small boats to ferry personnel from the doomed ship to shore. Others lent a hand to wounded shipmates in distress. It was our worst hour and yet our finest hour.

In the lull between the two attacks we moved out of the ditch to one or more locations on Ford Island.

During the second part of the attack I recall being in an enclosed building constructed of concrete blocks and having a metal roof. We just "hunkered down" and hoped to heck they missed our building. As there were no windows in the building, I assume we were in some kind of storage building, and our inability to observe what was going on outside was scary.

As is eloquently told in the EW reports of Warren Upton and others, most of us ended up aboard USS Argonne, our Base Force Flag Ship for the night of December 7th. As the boat carrying us from Ford Island made it's way across the Harbor to what was known as "1010 docks," we observed the terrible site of the mangled superstructure of USS Arizona, the capsized Oklahoma, the sunken and burning California, Nevada, Maryland and other ships, such as the destroyers, Downs and Cassin, and Shaw, the latter three being almost obliterated in Dry-dock. These sights gave us a knot in the pit of our stomachs and very heavy hearts.

On the night of December 7th, we brought up ammunition which has been stored in the "bowels" of the Argonne, something new to the manicured nails of a radioman. It would get worse, as we would go back on December 8th and retrieve ammo from inside Utah, where welders had cut entrances into the bottom.

We were the lucky ones, collecting ammunition; many were assigned the job of collecting bodies and body parts from the murky waters of the harbor. Many remains would be buried in unmarked graves in the Cemetery of the Pacific, aka "The Punchbowl." We later learned they were from USS Arizona, USS Oklahoma, West Virginia, USS Utah and other ships as well as Marines, Soldiers and Airmen killed in the area.

While aboard USS Argonne the night of December 7th, one more shipmate from the Utah, Pallas Brown, Seaman 2nd class would die from a stray bullet fired by nervous gun crews (some say from USS California,) who were shooting at what they thought were enemy planes returning in another Japanese attack. Unfortunately, they were firing on inbound aircraft from USS Enterprise which had been given clearance to land planes on Ford Island, causing a tragic loss of more American lives.

Shipmate Palace Brown, as well as some of the Enterprise's pilots may well have been the first casualties from "friendly fire" during our United States role in World War II. Seaman Leonard Price, USS Utah was wounded at the time Shipmate Brown was killed. Leonard Price recovered…

I spent one week aboard the USS *Vireo*, a mine sweeper, as a temporary replacement for their Radioman who was in the Hospital. On December 15th, I was transferred to USS *Saratoga*, an Aircraft Carrier, (CV-3) which was destined to be torpedoed on January 11, but fortunately not sunk. I would serve on other ships being newly commissioned and hurriedly sent to the Pacific where the war was not going well for the U.S. until after the Battle of Midway.

The long trek from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay lasted 3 years, 8 months and 25 days. I can truthfully state that I was where it started the day it started, and where it ended the day it ended - although my ship, the USS *Gasconade* (APA85,) an Attack Transport, did not drop anchor in Tokyo Bay until 11:00 on Sept. 2, 1945. *Alas, the surrender ceremony was over and Navy records do not show Gasconade as being present when the surrender was signed*. That long trip was paid for by many American lives as well as lives of our Allies and the Japanese. It is said that the military is only needed when the diplomats fail. Let's hope we keep America militarily strong, the diplomats do not fail, and this terrible history will never be rpeated. - Bill Hughes

+++++

Emails from Bill Hughes...

Tom: Thanks for the interesting pictures inside the New Jersey. The New Jersey transmitting equipment was pretty modern compared to some of the old buckets I served on during WW2. I think we may have one arc and Spark transmitter still left on the Utah. We had some old regenerative receivers as well as the more modern superhetrodyne receivers, and a battery backup locker which the new men had to maintain. The batteries were there for backup power to the ship's remote control apparatus. Warren (Upton) has a mind like a steel trap and he will remember more clearly than I. I still remember *"Stupid, you pour water into acid - not acid into water!"* I don't know if I ever told you Warren, but some 25 or 30 years later I was maintaining banks of storage batteries at microwave stations before I was issued the briefcase and a 3 piece suit.

Newspaper articles I have seen about Jack Vaessen, (rescued from the hull of USS *Utah* by welders) had his rating wrong. He was not a Seaman. Rather, he was a Fireman, and they had left off the part where Jack went above and beyond the call of duty to maintain the ship's lighting for as long as possible, and he became trapped inside the ship. They had to cut him out of the hull, and he still has the flashlight and wrench that he used to pound on the hull. He was decorated for valor with the Navy Cross and he certainly deserved it.

P.S. Warren and I worked together over 67 years ago. One of life's best memories was again seeing Warren and my other shipmates at our first USS *Utah* reunion 47 years after 12-07-1941.. The downside of that reunion was seeing how young kids had now turned into old men!

William "Bill" Hughes,
Master Chief Radioman, USN/Retired
Grand Prairie, Texas

Eyewitness Report...
Warren ("Red") Upton
Radioman 3/c "C" Division
USS UTAH, December 7, 1941

The following record of my experiences on December 7th, 1941, when the U.S.S. *Utah* was sunk in her berth on the west side of Ford Island [in Pearl Harbor], was taken, almost verbatim, from typewritten pages I recorded within months after the fateful day. Only some of the punctuation and a few words have been changed for easier reading by others.

I am sure each one of us has his own personal memories of that day. I could not have recorded the details of these experiences, as I remembered them after all the years, with any great degree of accuracy, without these notes from the past.

I owe the fact that I did make that record to my uncle and his wife, a retired school teacher, whom I visited several months following the outbreak of hostilities. At that time they urged me to record my experiences before the passing of many more months, as events pass from our memories over the years.

It is in their memory, in memory of those who gave their lives that day, and to my fellow U.S.S. *Utah* survivors, both living and deceased, I humbly contribute this small portion of a permanent historical record of a ship that each one of us has a special reason to remember.

Warren ("Red") Upton
Radioman 3/c "C" Division
San Jose, California

MY EXPERIENCES AT PEARL HARBOR DECEMBER 7, 1941 by Warren Upton

The Morning of Sunday, December 7, 1941 began as any other Sunday morning in the Islands. I had the evening watch the evening before and had turned in after 0030 (12:30am) and had gotten up about 0745, as I had planned to go to Waikiki Beach and do some swimming later in the day.

We had just completed nine weeks of practice bombing operations with Navy carriers and with Marine and Army Air force planes, so most everyone had some plans for relaxation and recreation. In fact, we had begun a six-section watch, which would give us the maximum time off between watches.

A Striker [Radioman trainee], Gross, was up and preparing to catch the 0800 liberty boat to the Fleet Landing. It being Sunday and holiday routine being observed, the rest of the [radio] gang, with the exception of the men on watch, were sleeping in late. Most of them had returned late from liberty in Honolulu the night before.

Those sleeping in the compartment next to Main Radio were: Mills, RM1/C; Jack Durham, Jerkovich, Hughes, and a new man, "Carpenter," - all RM3/C; and Bunting, Chapman, Truax, Veratto, Hill (*Cliff Hill, a Radioman striker, is reported as non-recoverable,and whose remains are believed to still be aboard the Utah.*), and a man whom Chief Putman had nick-named "Bolivar," all of whom were strikers [trainees]. In Main Radio [on watch] were: Berry, RM1/C, Clarence Durham, RM3/C, and France, a striker.

I was reaching over someone's cot to get my shaving gear out of my locker, when the first terrific impact jarred the ship. No one below had any idea what it could be, but most of the men were soon awake and on their feet. This must have been about 0755, as the last time I had looked at my wrist watch, a few minutes before it was 0750.

Berry, RM1/C, shouted something about a collision. Everyone was wondering what was happening, when a second terrific explosion shook the ship. After the second blast, the ship began to list slightly to port; I believe several light bulbs were broken.

We were soon on our way up the starboard ladder, leading out of the compartment to the next deck above. We could hear and feel the explosions of bombs dropping topside. There also were men coming from Central Station, which was located on the next platform deck below, which added to the congestion already on the ladder. As we climbed up the ladder I thought of what might happen if a bomb were to fall down the air trunk in which the ladder was located. A fireman from below was attempting to lower the battle grating at the top of the ladder, but he soon was persuaded otherwise.

I soon reached the second deck and seconds later had reached the main deck. This part of the main deck was located under the superstructure and was known as the "air castle." The ship's service store and soda fountain were located directly across the passageway from the top of the ladder.

Upon reaching the main deck, it sounded as though "hell had broken loose." Additional explosions shook the ship and what seemed to be a third large explosion occurred.

The ship immediately took a sharper list to port and started to settle. Someone shouted: "so that's their answer, the dirty yellow b___s," no doubt referring to the negotiations going on in Washington, D. C. By this time almost everyone was aware of what was happening; we were being attacked by Jap planes. By now most of the ships in the harbor had opened fire on the attacking aircraft.

The ship started to settle more rapidly and listed more sharply to port. We started for life jackets, which were stowed against the starboard bulkhead of the "air castle." There were not many, however, and I did not get one.

Some men ran from under the protection of the superstructure over the "air castle" to the open deck aft, but the open decks were being heavily strafed; most of them returned to the comparative safety of the "air castle." I did not know how many were hit by the strafing when they ran to the open deck. Several bullets also ricocheted down the ladders from the decks above.

By this time the ship was settling very rapidly, and the water was coming up the deck from the port side, carrying with it floating debris and timber. The ship had been covered with heavy timber to protect the decks during bombing operations. I heard LtCdr. Winser, our Communication Officer, give the order to abandon ship, which the bugler also sounded. The first torpedo apparently put the general alarm out of commission.

We were still being heavily strafed, and the Captain's ladder, which led from the "air castle" to the Captain's cabin and the deck above was jammed with men, who were hesitating because of the strafing. I slipped under the ladder rail and made my way to the deck above.

I do not remember any life line being up as I went over the side. I slid down the side of the ship - about forty feet or so - to the bilge keel, where I stopped momentarily. My legs were scratched quite badly from the barnacles on the side and bottom of the ship, as I was wearing white shorts, the uniform of the day.

I thought about jumping into the water below, which seemed to be sixty or seventy feet below where I had stopped, but there appeared to be too many men and too much debris directly below me. Some of the men tried to reach the pilings of the berth by traveling hand over hand down the lines which secured the ship to the pilings. Some of them were half way down the lines, when the lines snapped and dropped the men, like flies, into the water below.

About the same time a man came hurtling by me screaming madly as he fell. I never noticed what finally happened to him, but the life jacket he was wearing apparently saved him from serious injury during his descent, as he scraped the bottom of the ship on the way down.

I started to work my way aft on the bilge keel while the ship was settling rapidly. I pulled off my shoes and, for some reason, removed by wrist watch, which was hanging loosely on my wrist, and threw them into the water. The ship had settled considerably by this time. And the point where I stopped was then only ten to fifteen feet above the water, so I decided to jump the remainder of the distance.

Just before I jumped into the water, Lt. Hal Jones approached from behind and asked me if I could swim. I replied in the affirmative and jumped into the water and started swimming toward the berth pilings. Lt. Jones called for me to help him, so I returned and helped him to the berth pilings. As we approached the pilings, a tall, blonde fireman, who had manned the Captain's gig, threw me the small life ring from the gig's stern rail. The life ring was of little use, but I thought of keeping it as a souvenir. However, I thought it might be of use to someone, so I returned it.

After we had climbed onto the berth pilings one of our motor launches took us from there to a float, which was connected by a "cat-walk" to Ford Island. En route to the float we could see the gun crews of the U.S.S. *Tangier*, a seaplane tender, firing at the attacking planes.

We were soon on the "beach" and took cover in a trench that was being dug to lay sewer pipe. An ambulance drove up, and a marine jumped out and advised us to take cover and to get rid of our white clothing, or to rub dirt on them so that we would make a poorer target for the attacking planes.

From our vantage point in the ditch observing the battle, we saw the U.S.S. *Monaghans*, a destroyer, underway for the open sea, suddenly dropped two "ash cans" and made a hard right turn in an attempt to ram the enemy midget submarine. The explosions from the "ash cans" blew mud, water, etc. eighty or ninety feet into the air.

About this time high-level Jap bombers flew over from the south to north at an altitude of about 20,000 feet, in a V-formation. Our anti-aircraft batteries did not touch them.

There was a broken cloud ceiling, which afforded perfect conditions for an air attack such as this. The high-level bombers appeared to be white or silver in color, while the dive bombers and torpedo planes appeared to be darker in color. I saw a Jap plane disintegrate in mid-air and pieces of fuselage flutter to earth like leaves, after being hit by AA batteries from one of our ships.

One plane, which had been hit by AA fire from the U.S.S. *Curtiss,* which was anchored in West Lock Channel, caught fire, banked sharply, and crashed into one of the cranes of the *Curtiss*. This was evidently a last effort by the doomed pilot to destroy the ship.

The U.S.S. *Raleigh,* a light cruiser, which was berthed directly forward of the *Utah*, took a bomb hit on the port side. She rolled and pitched like a cork for a few seconds. She soon was level again and still firing what appeared to be every gun she had, including several batteries of "1 point 1's" which were our equivalent to the British "pom-pom" guns. There were occasional cheers from our men at incidents in our favor.

During this time, the U.S.S. *Arizona* was hit and exploded with such force that I thought for a moment the fuel tanks by Submarine Base had been hit.

We later took cover under a building for a few minutes, then spent several minutes inside the same building. This afforded very little protection other than that of a psychological nature. During this time I remember seeing Ed Gertz, EM3/C, covered with oil. His voice was all that was recognizable.

A truck came for us after we emerged from the building and took us toward the center of Ford Island, where some corrugated steel warehouses were located. One man was in considerable pain from what appeared to be a broken ankle and had to be helped on and off the truck. During our trip on the truck I can remember seeing the U.S.S. *Nevada* beached with part of her Bridge on fire.

After we had entered the warehouse, the second phase of the attack began. Dive bombers were doing their damage again. They seemed to work in pairs, bombing and strafing the ships and Air Station. We broke out some "tin hats" we had found in some of the crates and passed them around. A bomb hit between the building we were in and the adjacent building and blew concrete and rocks into the air, which broke through parts of the building we were in. The planes continued strafing, and some of the bullets came through the overhead and hit the "deck" just a few feet from me. This is

the closest I came to being hit from strafing that I remember.

After this phase of the attack was over we went to the main building of the warehouse complex, where we helped break out 50 caliber ammunition. Some of us obtained 30.06 cal. rifles. I had a bandolier of 30 cal. ammunition but no rifle, so I gave the ammunition to a Marine who was taking "pot" shots at the attacking planes.

We were ordered to spread out around a frame of a building that was under construction, in order to minimize the possibility of additional casualties in the event of further bombing and strafing by the enemy. We made breastworks from bags of cement, which were being used in the construction of the building. We were given blankets, which were greatly appreciated, as we were none too warm following our "swim."

Two photographers from Ford Island gave me some of their socks to protect my feet, which were quite sore by this time. Some of the civilian employees from the Air Station brought around some paint thinner and rags and helped us get the oil off our hands and faces.

The crew of the U.S.S. *California* was called back aboard ship after having abandoned ship earlier.

A "duck" (amphibious plane) took off - the first of our planes we saw in the air following the attack.

Some of the men received soda pop that was passed out, as the water had been turned off. It was rumored that the water supply had been poisoned.

We signed several musters while at this location in order to obtain an idea of whom had survived the ships sinking.

After leaving here I was passing a cook's barracks, when one of them called me over and gave me some trousers and shoes, which, although several sizes too large, were greatly appreciated.

We then went over to the front of the Administration Building, which contained the Ship's Service store, movie theater, etc. While there we were mustered again.

Shortly after I met Jerkovich and Mills, who told me I could get some dungarees and shoes at the ship's service store. I went in and received a pair of dungarees from a fellow from the *Utah*. I found a belt and a pair of tennis shoes, so I had almost a complete outfit of clothing.

Nearby there was a "shell shock" case. He was lying on a table, and a lady, still wearing an evening gown was caring for him. He was whimpering like a little baby.

All the *Utah* survivors in the group were then taken to a barracks on the second deck. On the way we passed a room where the women and children were. Another room was filled with casualties.

Shortly after our arrival at the bunk cubicle, Commander Warris, our Executive Officer, arrived and took charge. We were taken by motor launch to the U.S.S. *Argonne*, then the flagship of Commander Base Force. Comdr. Warris was still wearing civilian clothing and stood next to the Coxwain of the motor launch as we crossed the channel. There was a machine gun mounted in the motor launch, and several men had rifles. It took several trips to ferry all the group of *Utah* survivors to the *Argonne.*

For a while after our arrival aboard the Argonne we sat on deck and talked.

That evening I managed to take a shower, using my discarded underwear as a towel. While in the shower room I met a radio striker from the *Argonne*, who took me to the radio shack, where I was put on watch for that night.

Soon afterward we had chow, the first I had eaten since Saturday evening. That evening we were issued gas masks.

Occasionally, all men topside would be called to attention, in respect for the bodies which were being landed on the dock close by.

That evening, after dark, most of the radio gang from the Utah, with other survivors, helped unload the 5-inch ammunition from the *Argonne.* After that Jerkovich, Mills, and several others from the radio gang, and I sat around the mess hall, drinking coffee and exchanging ideas about our experiences of the attack.

We finally turned in about 11pm. I had a bare bunk and only my gas mask for a pillow. I had been given a blanket, but someone had taken it from the bunk during my absence.

I had just started to doze off when firing commenced topside. Everyone in the sleeping compartment rushed to the mess deck. The only lighting on the mess deck was from the blue battle lights.

Shortly after the firing commenced a bullet struck the bulkhead, came all the way through, and hit a man close by, who fell to the deck. It was several minutes before a pharmacist mate arrived. The wounded man was taken to the sick bay where he died a few minutes later. It was later learned that the firing was a result of unidentified planes coming in to land at Ford Island. The planes were later identified as aircraft from the carrier U.S.S. *Enterprise.* We heard that three of the planes had been shot down or crashed. We learned later that the man killed on the mess deck was a yeoman striker from the *Utah.*

[Warren Upton Note: *The Deck Log of the USS ARGONNE confirms that the man killed was Pallas Brown, SN1.c from the USS Utah. Another man, Leonard Price, SN1/c, also from the USS Utah wounded in the upper left arm. He was transferred to the Naval Hospital. Ironically, both had survived the sinking of the Utah earlier in the day. A third man, V. W. NANCE, SN1/c, USS Nevada was found lying on the 1010 Dock near the north east end having been wounded in the left shoulder with a machine gun bullet. NANCE was given first aid treatment on the ARGONNE and transferred to the Naval Hospital for treatment. Source: Deck Log, USS ARGONNE, National Archives of the U. S.)*

I finally got back to sleep for what seemed like minutes, when I was awakened for a midwatch in the radio shack. I was already dressed, so I just walked topside to the radio shack. On the way I could see the fire from the U.S.S. *Arizona* burning and a fireboat and tugs standing alongside, pouring water on her. The drizzle that had started earlier that evening was still falling.

I relieved a circuit watch for about two hours until Galley, CRM, learned that I had handled ammunition until late and let me turn in again. The two hours on watch were rather uncomfortable, as the cuts and scratches on my legs were becoming quite sore. The next day we just sat around and talked, remaining near the radio shack for most of the day.

That night [December 8th,] I had the midwatch again. The weather was the same as it was the previous night - low ceiling, with a light drizzle. The *Arizona* still burned. I had a radiotelephone watch with the U.S.S. *California* and Com 14 [Commandant 14th Naval District,] on Ford Island and relieved Jerkovich, who had the evening watch. The [radio] set shorted out occasionally from the drizzle. I had an extra French type handset, which I used when the regular phones and microphone failed to work. Most of the watch was taken up with routine testing.

Near Dawn the Enterprise's planes began to take off from Ford Island. I was given a message to that effect and passed it on to the Officer-of-the-Deck. Just about dawn I could see *Enterprise* standing out. Several destroyers preceded her, sweeping the channel with searchlights and sound gear for periscopes or for submerged submarines. The *California* was being pumped out but was still settling. Later she had to be flooded to keep from capsizing.

Admiral Calhoun, then Commander Base Force, was on the bridge about sunrise to look things over. I was relieved about 0600, went below for chow, then turned in on the same bare bunk, with my gas mask for a pillow.

The next thing I knew a striker from the radio shack was awakening me and told me I was wanted in the Communication Office. He also wanted Gross, whom he located shortly thereafter.

We were led to the Communication Office, where an Ensign told Gross and me that we were going to the U. S. S. *Castor* with Gutreaux, a Chief Radioman from that ship. Truax and several others from the *Utah* radio gang were topside as we left the *Argonne* and bade us goodbye and wished us luck.

We caught a ride in a passing motor launch to the U.S.S. *Castor*, which was tied up at the Submarine Base. Shortly after reporting aboard, Gross and I were issued new bags of clothing. - WU

Emails from Warren Upton…

I enlisted in the US Navy for six years on 13th of February 1940. I had full intentions of making a career of it at that time. I was paid off about a month after expiration of enlistment. I wasn't sure about shipping over, as my last ship, the USS *William Ward Burrows* (AP-6) "swung around the hook" for months after the end of the war, which got pretty monotonous. I did make Chief Radioman (AA) during that time. Shortly after discharge I was offered a job with Mackay Radio in San Francisco, which I accepted. I enlisted in the Naval Reserve and became involved with an Organized Surface Division on Treasure Island.

When the Korean War started I was again called to active duty and spent 14 months in Korean and Japanese waters. For pay purposes I had 11 years and 29 days service. Many times I regret not staying for 20.

Thanks for sending those unique photos of the communication spaces aboard the USS *New Jersey*. I was aboard a ship in Wonsan Harbor when the Jersey was hit by enemy fire. I believe there was one casualty. I remember that USS *New Jersey*, and the USS *Missouri,* used to rotate duty every six months. - W

New York Shipbuilding…by Max Newhart

Author: *American Battleships* (1995)

US Air Force 1961-1965

Battleship New Jersey Volunteer - 7 years

~~~

New York Ship -building Company, commonly referred to as "New York Ship", had a relatively short existence, but a very distinguished one. It was actually one of many shipyards in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and operating on the coastal waterways during the twentieth century.

But in this article, it's all about New York Ship, with no less than 121 U.S. Navy and Coast Guard warships to her credit - and *many* of these ships found a permanent place in the annals of U.S. Naval History.

The name New York Ship was chosen because it was first proposed to be built in Staten Island, New York, but its founder, Henry G. Morse, found another perfect site in Camden, New Jersey, and it offered far better facilities. He was also acutely aware that these facilities would be of great concern for the experienced shipyard workers that he hoped to employ. So, keeping the name, construction began with ground breaking on July 3, 1899, and New York Shipbuilding first opened in 1900.

The first contracted ship built at New York Ship was the oil tanker M.S. *Dollar* for the J.M. Guffey Petroleum Company, with her keel laid on November 29, 1900. The last ship contracted, number #542, was Combat Support Ship USS *Camden* AOE-2 - an impressive total of 542 ships of all types were contracted and completed.

During World War I, New York Ship was the largest shipyard in the world. Unfortunately though, due to shipbuilding conditions in the United States during the 1960's, the shipyard closed in 1967.

In 1971, the old New York Ship site once again reopened as the Broadway Terminal, where it is now operated by the South Jersey Port Corporation. Today this facility handles over 2 million tons of cargo a year, and is one of the largest port areas in the United States. Portions of the site along its waterfront can still handle deep-draft ships, and of course that included the Battleship *New Jersey*.

It is interesting that in 2000, *NEW JERSEY* was docked at Broadway Terminal, and her restoration work began there with hundreds of volunteers swarming over her decks day after day. These were the same piers once occupied by the many famous ships of World War II built at New York Ship…

USS *Utah* (BB-31/AG-16) was delivered by New York Shipyard on August 30, 1911 and commissioned at the Philadelphia Navy Yard on 31 August 1911. *Utah* operated in the waters of the Chesapeake Bay as an engineering and gunnery training ship and continued that duty until August 30, 1918.

Then, under the terms of the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty, Utah was selected for conversion as a mobile target, and on 1 July 1931, *Utah* was reclassified as AG-16. After completion of the conversion she served in this capacity training in the Atlantic and was soon moved to the Pacific in 1932. She arrived at Pearl Harbor in late September 1941 and continued aircraft training and target duties.

The attack on the fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 lasted a little under two hours, but for *Utah,* it was over in minutes. At 0801 she took a torpedo hit forward and immediately started listing to port. At 0812, her mooring lines snapped, and *Utah* rolled over on her beam ends. Her partially submerged hulk still remains at Pearl Harbor with an unknown number of men entombed inside, and Chief Watertender Peter Tomich received the Medal of Honor posthumously for his bravery ensuring the safety of others aboard *Utah.*

~~~~~

USS *Oklahoma* (BB-36) was launched at New York Shipyard on 23 March 1914, and commissioned at Philadelphia on 2 May 1916 . During World War I the ship trained off the east coast and participated in Allied convoy duties off the coast of Europe.

Oklahoma, along with the other battleships of the Pacific Fleet, was based at Pearl Harbor from December 6, 1940, and compled normal patrols and exercises.

She was also one of those moored in Battleship Row on December 7, 1941 when the Japanese attacked. Outboard alongside *Maryland*, *Oklahoma* took 3 torpedo hits almost immediately after the first Japanese bombs fell. As she began to capsize, 2 more torpedoes struck home. Within twenty minutes after the attack began, she had swung over until halted by her masts touching the bottom of the harbor.

The salvage of *Oklahoma* began in March 1943, and *Oklahoma* entered dry dock December 28. *Oklahoma* was finally decommissioned on September 1, 1944; stripped of her guns and superstructure, and sold December 5, 1946 for scrapping. On her way bound for San Francisco, *Oklahoma* parted her tow lines and sank on May 17, 1947, 540 miles out from Pearl Harbor.

~~~~~
~~~~~

USS *Reuben James,* (DD-245) was delivered and commissioned at New York Shipyard on September 24, 1920, as but one of a New York Ship contract consisting of twenty Destroyers, hull numbers DD-231 to DD-250.

In March 1941, *Reuben James* joined the convoy escort forces to promote the safe arrival of war material to Britain. On October 31, while assigned with four other destroyers to escort the eastbound convoy HX-156 at about 0525 hours, *Reuben James* was torpedoed by the German submarine *U-552.* The destroyer had positioned itself between an ammunition ship in the convoy and the known position of a German U-Boat Wolfpack. Its magazine exploded, and the ship sank quickly. Of the crew, 44 survived, and 100 died. *Reuben James* was the first U.S. Navy ship sunk by hostile action in World War II.

~~~~~

USS *Saratoga* (CV-3), was originally laid down at NY Ship as *Saratoga* (CC-3), and as one of the *Lexington* (CC-1) class of battlecruisers, that were cancelled by American compliance to the Washington Naval Treaty of February 8, 1922. She was then ordered converted to an aircraft carrier and reclassified CV-3 on July 1, 1922. When commissioned on November 16, 1927 she became the first "Fast Carrier" in the U.S. Navy. *Sara* quickly proved the value of her type. She sailed from Philadelphia on 6 January 1928 for shakedown; and, on 11 January, her air officer, and future World War II hero, **Marc A. Mitscher**, landed the first aircraft aboard. Except for exercises with the Atlantic Fleet, *Saratoga* spent nearly all of her career with the Pacific Fleet.

After the Japanese surrender, *Sara* sailed from Hawaii on September 9, 1945 transporting 3,712 returning naval veterans home to the United States under Operation "Magic Carpet." By the end of her "Magic Carpet" service, *Saratoga* brought home 29,204 Pacific war veterans, more than any other individual ship. At the time, she also held the record for greatest number of aircraft landed on a carrier - a lifetime total of 98,549 landings in 17 years!

Saratoga was then assigned to "Operation Crossroads" at Bikini Atoll to test the effects of an atomic bomb on naval vessels. She survived the first blast, an air burst, with only minor damage, but was mortally wounded by the second one, an underwater blast which was detonated under a landing craft only 500 yards from the carrier. Salvage efforts were prevented by radioactivity, and seven and one-half hours after the blast, with her funnel collapsed across her deck, *Saratoga* slipped beneath the surface of the lagoon. This great and historic ship was stricken from the Navy list on August 25, 1946.

~~~~~

USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35), was built by New York Ship, and commissioned on November 15, 1932 at the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

In July of 1945, with Captain Charles B. McVay, III in command, *Indianapolis* received orders to proceed at high speed to Tinian, carrying parts and nuclear material to be used in the atomic bombs later dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Arriving at Pearl Harbor on July 19, she proceeded unescorted and arrived at Tinian on July 26.

After delivering her top-secret cargo at Tinian, *Indianapolis* was dispatched to Guam where she disembarked men and then headed for Leyte. Departing Guam on July 28, *Indianapolis* proceeded by a direct route, and again, unescorted. Early in the morning, of July 30, at 1215 a.m., two heavy explosions occurred against her starboard side forward, and she capsized and sank within 12 minutes. *Indianapolis* had been hit by two torpedoes from Japanese submarine I-*58.* The seas had been moderate; the visibility good, and *Indianapolis* had been steaming at 17 knots. When the ship did not reach Leyte on the 31st, and as scheduled, no report was filed that she was overdue. It was not until 1025 on August 2nd, that the survivors were sighted, and only by chance, when they were seen by a plane on a routine patrol. The pilot immediately dropped a life raft and radio transmitter. All air and surface units capable of rescue operations were dispatched to the scene, and the surrounding waters were repeatedly searched for survivors. Of 1,199 Indianapolis crewmen, only 316 survived the shark infested waters…

There were many other familiar names of ships built for service by New York Ship during World War II and for many years following the war's end. They included USS *Idaho* (BB-42), USS *Colorado,* (BB-45), USS *Washington* (BB-47),USS *South Dakota* (BB-57), USS *Alaska* (CB-1), USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63), plus scores of Heavy and Light Cruisers, Destroyers, Coast Guard Patrol Boats, and numerous landing craft. And N.S. *Savannah,* the first nuclear powered merchant ship, was also built at New York Ship.

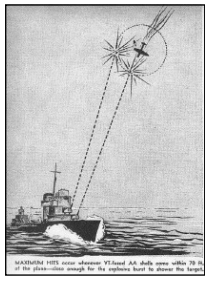
Of the 542 ships built at New York Ship in Camden, (and just about a mile or so south of where Battleship New Jersey is tied up today,) the few that we did select to represent all that are proudly found today in U.S. Naval History was not an easy choice.

Max Newhart
Hamilton, New Jersey

Reference sources: New York Shipbuilding Corporate History - *"50 Years New York Shipbuilding Corporation", 1949;* DANFS, Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships; and *"American Battleships",* by Max Newhart, Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 1995.

"VT Fuze - Tiny, but deadly…"

In November 1945, an article with this title appeared in *"All Hands"* magazine. With thanks to shipmate Gene Slover, he thought it would interest to us for *The Jerseyman,* and especially for the men that once manned 5"/38 AA batteries during World War II.



According to the article, the [VT Fuze] - ***"Navy-Developed device was Rated as Second Only to the Atomic Bomb in Scientific Feats".***

The caption from the *"All Hands"* drawing at left reads: "Maximum Hits occur whenever VT-fused AA shells come within 70 feet of the plane-close enough for the explosive burst to shower the target". - TH

- - It was early August 1942… The Marines had landed on Guadalcanal and begun the long, bitter fight toward the enemy's homeland. A few nights later, a Jap plane circled the water off Savo Island, dropped one flare, then another. Distant guns flashed and USS *Vincennes*, *Quincy* and *Astoria,* and the Aussie cruiser *Canberra,* were so severely damaged that they were unable to return effective fire, and later sank. Things were really tough all over for the Allies.

About that time, the gun crews of the newly commissioned USS *Cleveland* went through an AA drill while their ship cruised placid Chesapeake Bay, the 5-inch dual–purpose guns tracked three radio-controlled target planes for an instant, then the guns flashed. The three "drones" were brought down, two in flames.

Late in 1942, the USS *Wright*, a seaplane tender, took aboard 4,500 rounds of special AA ammunition at Pearl Harbor for delivery to the South Pacific. At Noumea they were distributed by Admiral Halsey to ships considered the most likely to see quick action.

On 5 Jan 1943 four Aichi 99 dive bombers attacked a task force, making two near misses and one direct hit on a cruiser. The pilot of one enemy plane, thinking himself out of effective antiaircraft range, flew in a straight course long enough for the *Helena's* after-5-inch AA battery to get a good set-up. Two 5-inch twin mounts opened fire. On the second salvo a burst enveloped the Jap plane and it crashed in flames.

The *Helena* crew members who were topside at that instant saw the battle premier of an amazing device that was to materially reduce the airplane's threat to the surface ship.

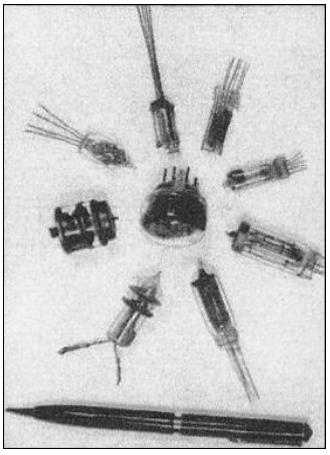
Neither the men on the *Helena* nor the *Cleveland's* gunners who gave it the first "sea test" knew it then but the secret pint-sized device that fitted into the nose of the projectiles was capable of converting the Fleet's 5-inch rifles from poor AA weapons info flaming harikari swords for Jap pilots.

Last month [October 1945] the navy identified the secret device as the VT (for variable time) fuze and described it as second only to the atomic bomb as the greatest scientific development of the war. From the time it was first used in early 1943 it provided a new deadliness to artillery accuracy.

VT is a radio proximity fuze which explodes a projectile as soon as it comes close enough to a target to inflict damage. During two and a half years of war, Navy shipboard gunners used it to write an almost unbelievable record of enemy planes destroyed. Had there been no VT to check them, the Kamikaze attacks may well have reached the effectiveness the Japanese had hoped for.

Not only was the VT fuze highly successful in breaking Jap airpower, but it throttled the Nazi buzz bomb attack on London in the summer of 1944 and sparked the killing artillery assault which threw back the Germans in the "battle of the bulge" in the winter of 1944.

The VT fuze is an extremely rugged "five tube" radio sending and receiving station which fits into the nose of a projectile. The heart of this miniature radio station is a vacuum tube which sends out a continuous radio frequency signal or electro-magnetic impulses at the speed of light - 186,000 miles per second. The impulses are reflected back to the tube by any target that gives a radio reflection, such as metal objects, water or earth.



Interaction of the outgoing and the incoming reflected impulses creates a "ripple pulse" Which is amplified by vacuum tubes in the fuze. This impulse is fed to a thyratron tube which acts as an electronic switch to initiate the detonation. When the VT-fuzed projectile passes in flight within about 70 feet of an airplane, the "ripple pulse" then is strong enough to trigger the thyratron tube which permits enough electric current to pass through an electric detonator to make it explode. This

explosion sets off an auxiliary explosive charge or booster carried in the fuze which in turn detonates the main explosive charge in the body of the projectile.

This 'Goldbergian' triumph is the joint child of the Bureau of Ordnance and scientists of the Office of Scientific Research and Development. Research began in August 1940 and continued throughout the war, although the final product remained little changed from the type of tube tested by the *Cleveland*. The chief problem was to develop miniature vacuum tubes - one inch long and about as thick as a pencil - and other electronic parts small enough to fit into the nose of a projectile, yet rugged enough to withstand **the** shock of being fired from a gun and the centrifugal pressure created by the rotation of the projectiles in flight. Photo-electric triggering devices were the first to be successful, but circuits based on the principle of radio reflection - also used in Radar and IFF, - were later adopted as the most effective for the purpose.

Other tough requirements of the ideal device which the scientist met was the creation of a rugged miniature storage battery and the provision of a very high degree of safety for handlers and gunners.

The proof of this scientific pudding lies in shooting records made around the world, but particularly by ships in the Pacific. The crews of the 5-inch mounts were able to pick off the choicest plums time and again before the enemy came within range of the rapid-firing 20 and 40 mm guns. VT also eliminated the guesswork and labor of fuze-setting and the errors inherent in time-fuze mechanisms. Previous to VT's advent, these bugaboos had spoiled countless well-directed shots. Because a VT-fuzed projectile explodes automatically when it reaches a point where its fragments can shower a target, good fire control pays off with hits every time.

VT was one of the most potent factors in the Navy's fight against suicide bombers in the last desperate months of Jap resistance. Ships in the Okinawa anchorage were within easy range of Japan-based suicide raiders. A sample of what happened during the long siege of Okinawa and the part placed by VT is the action in which the destroyers *Hadley* and *Evans*, the LCS (L) 84, the LCS's 82 and 83, and the LSM (R)193 took part on 11 May.

The destroyers and landing craft support ships were stationed off Okinawa to guard supply ships and offer fighter direction for the area. Shortly after midnight there was an air alarm and the ships were at GQ for more than an hour. Dawn found the sea calm, visibility good to moderate. A Combat Air Patrol arrived on station. Soon the radar picked up the first of several raids coming into the vicinity and the CAP went into action. (The Fighter Director tally later revealed that the little group of ships and planes had to oppose a total of 156 enemy planes.)

At 0754 a twin-float Jake came into view off the *Evans* and was shot down at 0757, all guns participating. From then on, the two plucky DD's were under almost constant attack by an enemy force of 50 planes, all of them destroyed, but not before several had completed their suicide roles. (The Marine CAP had exhausted its ammunition in fighting off the first attackers, but the pilots stuck by the DD's anyhow, flying their planes at the Japs to head them off.)

At the end of the first half-hour, the *Evans* had been hit four times by suicide planes, each ablaze from anti-aircraft fire. The *Hadley* had knocked down a dozen enemy planes and the *Evans* had accounted for 23 before she had to retire from the fight-13 of them with VT-fuzed 5-inch shells. Only one Jap plane taken on by the 5-inch gunners of the *Hadley* as a target excaped undamaged.

The final fury of the Jap assault struck the Hadley at 0920 when 10 enemy planes surrounded the ship and dived simultaneously. All were destroyed, but the Hadley took two bomb hits, one a Baka, and was struck by two suiciders.

"We got planes that were way out of machine gun range," said the Gunnery officer, who also saw four other Jap craft splashed by the combined fire of the 5-inch guns and the automatics. Five more planes were to be seen smoking and flaming in the air from hits from exploding 5-inch shells. "Indispensable" was the verdict on the role played by VT-fuzed ammunition in this action.

The Navy surrounded the entire VT fuze project from start to finish, with elaborate secrecy. On the fighting fronts, great care was taken to keep "duds" from enemy hands. Except for the limited use during Britain's battle of the buzz-bomb, the Combined Chiefs of Staff refused to permit the fuze to be used on land until 25 Oct 1944. Before that date, the Navy even avoided firing VT-fuzed shells near islands of the Pacific. Almost a million researchers, workers in production and assembly plants, ammunition handlers,Marine guards and finally the men at the guns-shared some part of the secret of this devastating weapon, but to their credit, the only clue to its existence was what seemed-to the Japs at least - fantastically accurate gunfire. - -

Submitted by:
Gene Slover
La Mesa, Texas

SHIP'S BELLS…

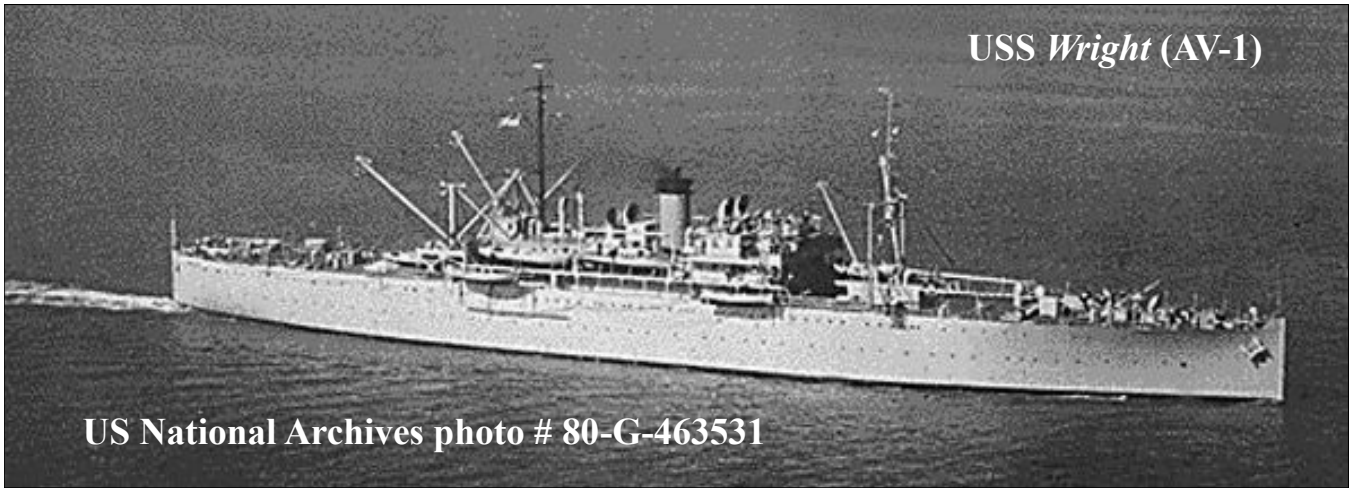
USS WRIGHT (AZ-1/AV-1)
Renamed USS *San Clemente* (AG-79) 1 February 1945

Wright-Class Aircraft Tender
Laid down at American International Shipbuilding Corp,
Hog Island, Pennsylvania in 1919
(Originally built as a "Hog Island" Freighter...)
Commissioned 16 December 1921
Decommissioned 21 June 1946 Stricken 1 July 1946
Displacement 11,500 Tons
Length 448' Beam 58' Draft 23'

USS *Wright* was the first U.S. Navy ship designated as a seaplane tender. During the 1920's she saw extensive service along the US east coast, including the salvage of the submarine *S-4*, hurricane relief, troop transport, etc. She served in the Pacific during 1930's and into WWII. Shortly before WWII she assisted in the establishment of several advance bases in the Pacific. Early in the war she was used as a transport to supply and support various bases, especially those around Hawaii. From mid-1942 on she again saw service as a seaplane tender. Reclassified as a miscellaneous auxiliary (**AG 79**) on 1 October 1944, she served as a headquarters ship for Pacific service forces.

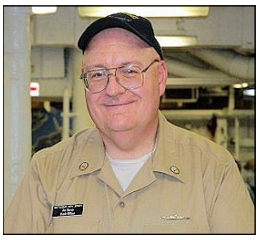
(**See previous article on VT Fuzes…** "Late in 1942, the USS *Wright,* a seaplane tender, took aboard the first 4,500 rounds of special AA ammunition at Pearl Harbor for delivery to the South Pacific. At Noumea they were distributed by Admiral Halsey to ships most likely to see quick action.")

USS *Wright's* bell photo was from the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, and provided courtesy of
Dave Dimarzio, AFCM, USN/USNR (Retired)
Pennsville, New Jersey



VOLUNTEERS - OVERNIGHT ENCAMPMENTS…

Battleship "Camp"...



Joe "Buff" Moran
Director of Encampments
Philadelphia, Pa.
Volunteer… 5 years

By Joe "Buff" Moran, Director of Encampments Program, and Rich "Yoda" Zimmermann -

More than a few of us remember well the early days of the Battleship New Jersey Encampment Program. It was October of 2001, when the ship had been moved into its present berth, and then in the summer of 2002 when we began the Battleship Encampments. These early camps were very small, and the first one only had about 35 campers. Our big goal was to achieve 50 campers which we soon did, and with only one or two docents available to help run it all. Then we soon began to wonder what would happen if and when we break a hundred campers? That fearful night also arrived with a very big group, but our cry for more volunteer to help us was answered, and we were able to cover the group easily.

Maggie Rackl
Encampments
Coordinator

In time we eventually broke through two hundred campers, then three hundred a night, and now several times a year we will have 350 campers aboard. We can look back and smile now at those days of "just" 100 campers, as almost like having a night off. By an internal survey we had taken last year, it now looks like we have developed into one of the largest, and possibly even *the* largest ship-based camping programs in North America. Neat! But without our group of truly dedicated volunteers, we certainly could not have made it.

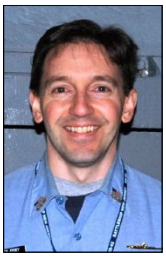
Rich "Yoda" Zimmermann
Laurel Springs, NJ
Volunteer… 8 years

Jim Anderson
Simulator Manager
Somerdale, NJ

The composition and numbers of our camping program have changed a lot. From a slow start of a few hundred campers as total in the first season, to over 16,500 last two seasons, is a proud accomplishment. For 2009, we have already pre-registered 11,000 for camp, and from a beginning tally on New Years Eve (with about 220 campers,) and until the end of 2009, we hope to be able to set our third attendance record in a row.

Andy Wager
Retired CPO, USN
USS *New Jersey* (BB-62)
USS *Wisconsin* (BB-64)
Barrington, N.J.
Volunteer… 7 years

We could not have grown the program without the support of about 30 plus dedicated docents and watch officers. We have had scout groups, church groups, private clubs and family groups. We have also had nearly as many adults join us along with their children as we have had children. One night we even had a past governor of New Jersey come aboard with his grand children when the kids came aboard with their scout group. We now look at a night of 200 as a routine camp, 300 as very busy, and 350 as a lot of work - but fun. As our late Encampment Manager Tom Jaskel used to say, "It's all about my guys," meaning the Docent men and women, and the watch officers, that have made this program go on so well week after week. It is with lasting and fond recognition of Tom Jaskel's leadership, that we are proud as to how well we are handling his legacy.



John "Papa John" Makara
Mt. Laurel, NJ
Volunteer… 7 years

John Alberta - USN
Deptford, NJ
Volunteer...7 years

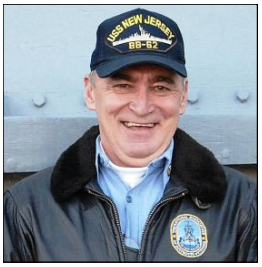
To provide readers a sense of how our encampments work, first, we have Maggie Rackl in the encampments office. Maggie is our right arm of the program dealing with all the phone calls, reservations, collections, and the thousand and one things that go on during the week before each encampment, and that have to be done from Monday thru Friday.

Paul "Gilligan" Neissner
USS *Forrestal* (CVA-59)
Camden, NJ
Volunteer… 7 years

Then, onto the encampments, where on any Friday or Saturday night at 1600, our Docents and the campers begin to arrive.

VOLUNTEERS - OVERNIGHT ENCAMPMENTS…

Al Alkins
Runnemede, N.J.
Volunteer...5 Years



Larry Hennessey
BT3/c USNR
USS *Wm. Keith* DD-775
Deptford, NJ
Volunteer...3 years

Jerry "Wardroom" Donovan
USN 1961-63
USS *Norris* DDE 859
USS *Davis* DD 937
Cherry Hill, NJ
Volunteer… 8 years

Bill "Tackelberry" Liebfrid
Volunteer...7 years

They are met on the pier by Watch Officer Jim "JT" Taylor and our Simulator Driver Jim Anderson. They sort out the groups as they arrive, provide a ride on the simulator, and from there they pass through the white gate, with the historic and massive Battleship New Jersey directly in front of them. With the help of the Security Officers, campers have their group pictures taken and walk up the pier. In the winter, the ship is lit up and sometimes she is covered with snow, or ice, and often outlined by the sunset. Most of the time, evenings and nights along the Delaware River are a beautiful sight, and the Philadelphia panorama is lit up with all kinds of colored lights.

We invariably find the campers are very enthused to come aboard Battleship New Jersey. The aft Quarterdeck crew of Rich "Yoda" Zimmermann, Frank "Digger" Miller, Johnny Alberta, Skip "SOPA" Leeson and many other docents greet them, count them, and then lead them below to an assigned berthing compartment. Campers usually arrive in the forward mess deck area with enough luggage for about a month or two stay, and are greeted by another team, consisting of Watch Officer Bill "Tackelberry" Liebfrid, Joe "Buff" Moran and many other docents that are working on that night. Some night we have about 20 people in the camp crew, and all of their photos, along with a brief biographies, have been posted along with this article - we are very proud of all hands for their consistent participation and help through these past 7 years.

Bill Vets - USN
Turnersville, NJ
Volunteer… 8 years

After we settle them in, they start to explore the aft part of the ship. The "Gedunk" is up and running, they can visit the brig and the ships services area, and if the weather is nice, come up on the main deck and explore the Main Battery in Turret #3. At the same time, we continue to board camper stragglers until about 1845 hours.

John "Chief" Stickney
Retired CPO, USN/USNR
Wilmington, Delaware
Volunteer...5 years

We always begin our encampments with a safety lecture held on the messdecks by "Buff" Moran and tour station assignments by Bill "Tackelberry" Liebfrid. Then a fire drill is held with a military style muster held on the pier. Docent Andy Wager forms them up for a final count, and has John Dorosky at his side as the scribe. We then pull away the assigned chow handlers, and hold opening ceremonies. These ceremonies are highlighted by playing of the familiar US Navy hymn *"Eternal Father",* and evening colors are held followed by chow call. The credit for the development of most of this program, and the ceremonies that each encampment group experiences aboard Battleship New Jersey, were designed and established under the direction of Tom Jaskel who sadly passed away this past spring, and not many encampments go by where we do not recall his presence…

Maria "Smurfette" Basara
Cinnaminson, NJ
Volunteer… 1½ years

Frank Chiacchio -
USN 1956-1960
USS *Remey* DD-688
Cherry Hill, NJ
Volunteer...8 years

In the galley, the campers are formed into two chow lines, running port and starboard. The chow handlers dish up the food, consisting of pasta and meatballs, cookies, and a choice of red or yellow "Bug Juice".

By now, readers can probably tell that we quickly immersed the campers into a full naval experience including using fun nicknames, correct shipboard terminology, and other familiar words remembered by hundreds of thousands of sailors through their years in service aboard ships of the United

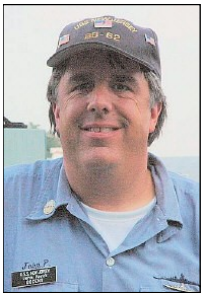
Jim "JT" Taylor
Volunteer… 6 years

States Navy. As with any efficient shipboard galley crew, we can also feed 350 campers in just about 20 minutes, and then… it's tour time.

The tours aboard the ship includes the popular 16" turret visit, the Combat Engagement Center (CEC), and if the weather cooperates, out onto the weather decks and up to the 05 deck level just above the bridge for some great photo opportunities. With the opening of our new "City at Sea" tour, we also have more spaces available to us inside the ship whenever we have ice and snow. During the early evening we also constantly assimilate campers that have arrived late.

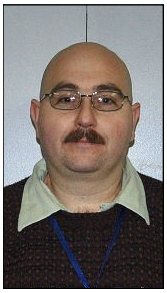
John"SOPA" Leeson
USS *New Jersey* 1983
Middletown, Delaware
Volunteer… 2 years

At about 2230 the tours conclude with a visit to the Gedunk, to the Mess decks, and to the berthing compartments. Then, lights out, we go red (red lights come on throughout the ship), and this happens at 2300 hours.



John Pavek
Volunteer… 7 Years

We always have a group of docents and watch officers who are aboard all night, and make patrols of the ship to ensure good order and safety. We also have EMT's who are on duty until 2400 hours. When we have a medical problem, we can call on "Medic One" Mitch Siegel and "Captain Crunch" Mike Newman. These trained medical professionals work with us through an agreement with Cooper Hospital. We look upon them both as an integral part of the battleship crew, and they can handle anything from too much excitement to a falling injury. We have also hosted a number of wheelchair campers and blind campers. Our Medics are always available to help out, and they do their best to make the program a memorable, exciting, and fun



Mitchell "Mitch" Siegel. EMT
Audubon, NJ
Volunteer… 7 years
"I have been a proud crewmember since 3 months before the ship's opening. Many volunteer shipmates have worn my bandages proudly…"

overnight for our guests.

On any given night you can see groups navigating all parts of the ship, being toured by many of our docents and watch officers. We often do double, and sometimes triple duty and it is all fun. Some of the regulars are: Ken Kersch, Gerry "The Leak" McCloskey, "Skip" Leeson, and Paul "Gilligan" Neissner. Frank "Digger" Miller, Johnny Albertson, Bill "Marine" Oneill, Dave DiMarzio, Dennis Walton, "Papa John" Makara, Jerry Donovan, Andy Wager, Pat "The Shark" Quinn, Joe Groppenbacher, Bill "COB" Judd, Arlene Baker, Maria Basara, Larry Hennessy, Bill Vets, Frank Chiacchio, Dennis Walton, John "Chief" Stickney, "Sgt Major" Paul Hanson, Al Alkins, Marty Mooney and our Curator Jason "Magoo" Hall, who also took the official ship's docent training and is one of our regulars. The individual volunteer photos seen along with this article also show that many of our volunteers were former military from all the armed services, and there are several that once served in USS *New Jersey* as crewmen. In a tally conducted by the Editor of *The Jerseyman*, it has been estimated that Battleship New Jersey volunteers have served in several hundred US Navy and US Coast Guard ships, and just about as many Marine, Army and Air Force units and divisions during their active service years, and we have a fair number of veterans that served during World War II and Korea. We also have about a dozen other volunteers that try to come back aboard and do tours for us as their schedule allows.

Martin Mooney, Sr.
American Heritage
Merit Badge Counselor
USN 1958-1964
Volunteer… 8 Years

John Dorosky
American Heritage
Merit Badge Counselor &
Scout Master 38 years...
ASA 4 years, USNR 20 years
Feasterville, Pa.
Volunteer… 8 Years

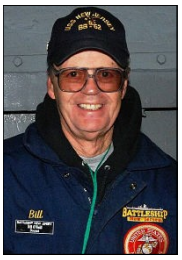
Wayne Schofield
US Navy
Bellmawr, NJ
Volunteer… 7 Years

Dennis Walton
Civil Air Patrol CDR.
National Park, NJ
Volunteer… 8 years

We are a big, active group of volunteers and watch officers, and many of us have been at it now for as long as 8 years.

The next morning, campers roll out early and have chow. Colors are held at 0800 sharp. If you listen very closely, at the same time you can also hear morning colors being played at the Coast Guard Base in Philadelphia. Following colors, the groups have self guided tours until they leave the ship at about 1200 hours. Some of our Boy Scouts also take Merit Badge Training on the ship. The Radio Merit Badge is quite popular and it is conducted by our volunteers in the Radio Club. We also conduct the 1st Aid Merit Badge, American Heritage Merit Badge, and Emergency Prep Merit Badges as well.

Jason "Magoo" Hall
Curator, Battleship New Jersey
Encampments Docent
Philadelphia Pa.

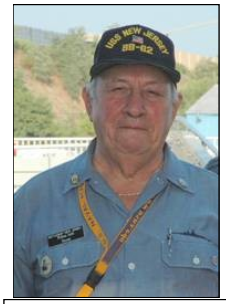


Bill "Marine" O'Neill
USMC 1958-1966
Gloucester City, NJ
Volunteer… 4 Years

We have a full, active overnight program, the largest in the country and growing, and again it is a tribute to the late Tom Jaskel who grew this program and encouraged the many volunteers and watch officers who now work the program in all weather.

Mike "Capt. Crunch" Newman
EMT
JROTC 4 Years
West Berlin, NJ

On an average camp night we will have groups from New York State to southern Virginia, and it is not unusual to have campers from Ohio, even Missouri and other more distant states. We have also been hosts to campers from Canada, Puerto Rico, and this past New Years Eve we welcomed a Family from Greenwich England. Family groups are invited and encouraged to join the overnight camp, and we also have a very special camp setup for each New Years Eve, where we can observe fireworks



Bill "COB" Jubb
USN 1955-1959
USS *General H.W. Butner* (AP-113)
Wenonah, NJ
Volunteer… 4 Years

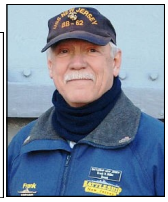
From Philadelphia from the 05 level. About 10 nights a year, we also have a girl's night, which follows the normal schedule but ends with a USO type show held on the fantail, and a "Women Serving in the Military" presentation by Volunteer Arlene Baker the next morning…

Arlene Baker
US Air Force Reserves
Westmont, NJ
Volunteer… 3 Years

For more information, please call the Ship's number 866-877-6262, EXT 203 or you can find us online at: www.battleshipnewjersey.org.

If any ship's volunteer reading this article would like to consider becoming involved with the camp program, please contact Joe "Buff" Moran at the ship's number. Camp docents are always busy, and you do not have to stay overnight. If volunteers have trouble walking, they can be assigned as a station docent and the tours will come to you. An evening on the Delaware, aboard the most decorated battleship, is a special event for both the campers and the encampment gang. Come on out and join us, you're gonna love it! ~~~~~

Frank "Digger" Miller USMC 1966-69
1st Marine Div. - Vietnam/9th-Eng'r Bn.
Pennsauken, NJ
Volunteer...8 years



Frank Miller - "I started with the maintenance crew when the ship was first brought into Camden and spent over 300 hours aboard painting, scraping, and doing whatever else Bos'n Shields asked us to do.

I later trained as a Docent from 19 Sept 2006 to 21 Nov 2006, and joined the Encampment program on 19 Jan 2007 after two daytime training tours with senior docents.

As per my records, I conducted 45 tours in 2007 with 822 guests at 18.26 guests per tour for over 270 volunteer hours. In 2008, I conducted 60 tours with 704 guests at 11.73 guests per tour, for over 360 volunteer hours.

In the two full years I have worked the overnight encampment program, I conducted 105 tours with 1526 guests at 14.53 guests per tour, and a total of over 630 volunteer hours." - - - -

Editor's Note: In requesting information from all encampment volunteers to include with their photos, Frank Miller's volunteer record is typical of those we received from other long-term volunteers... whether encampments, ship's maintenance, daily tour Docents or others - all represented *many* volunteer hours. - TH

VOLUNTEERS - OVERNIGHT ENCAMPMENTS
(CONTINUED…)

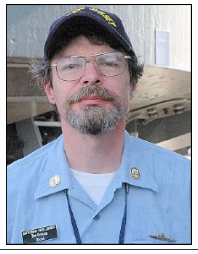
Roland Garber - USN
USS *Meredith* (DD-890)
Bellmawr, NJ
Volunteer… 8 years

Pat "Shark" Quinn
Mt. Laurel, NJ
Volunteer… 5 years

Joe Groppenbacher
Woodbury Heights, NJ
Volunteer...5 years

Dave "Flight Deck" DiMarzio
Retired MCPO, USN/USNR
Pennsville, NJ
Volunteer… 7 years

"Sgt Major" Paul Hansen
Retired US Army - 1st Cavalry
Aston, Pa.
Volunteer… 7 years



Ron Griscom
Pennsauken, NJ
Volunteer… 3 years

Gerry "The Leak" McCloskey
Havertown, Pa.
Volunteer...7 years

Ken Kersch - USN
USS *New Jersey* 1968/1969
Monmouth Junction, NJ
Volunteer… 8 years

Battleship New Jersey Volunteers…

On June 8, 2005, U.S. Representative Robert E. Andrews (D., N.J.),
entered the names of Battleship New Jersey Volunteers
into the Congressional Record of the U.S. House of Representatives.

To download this Adobe® Acrobat® file page from the Congressional Record,
enter the below search phrase into GOOGLE™ ...

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD HONORING THE VOLUNTEERS OF BATTLESHIP NEW JERSEY

BATTLESHIP DAYS... BY HAMP LAW

Uh... do my World War II battleship shipmates out there kinda have this trouble at reunion time...?

Logo courtesy of Maritime Artist and former USS NEW JERSEY crewman, **James A. Flood**

Disclaimer:

The Jerseyman is an independent online magazine, and produced as a keepsake journal for Battleship New Jersey museum volunteers, the former crewmen of USS *New Jersey*, and for our readers. ***The Jerseyman*** is not sold, subscriptions are not offered, and all credited photos, cartoons and stories are the sole property of their authors.

Wherever possible, ***The Jerseyman*** requests permission, properly credits, and identifies the source of photographs, stories, or quotations. If crediting errors, or any possible copyright infringements are found, please let us know and corrections will be made. Thanks...

Tom Helvig, CTRCM, USN (Retired - 1975)
Volunteer Writer/Editor *The Jerseyman*
68 Boothby Drive
Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054
email: Thelvig@aol.com
© 2009 All Rights Reserved